Peter’s Theory

Theory is debate about debate. The NFL left the rules of debate fairly open-ended, so debate round occur over how we should debate.

Theory can be run in a couple of different contexts. First, your opponent could have done something wrong. They could have run a very specific argument. You could run a plan when the resolution shouldn’t. You could exclude too many arguments.

There are four components to a theory argument.

Interpretation: Specify kind of rule that ought to be the case. (“Agent fiat counterplans are bad.”)

Violation: How your opponent is breaking the rule.

Standards: Individual justifications for the particular interpretation. It’s worth noting that there are two ways to articulate a theory debate, either through education or fairness. Education matters because schools only fund debate under the guide it’s educational. Fairness means equal opportunity to win the round. Standards must have a link to the interpretation and a link to the voters.

Voters: First, voters must link to standards and (transitively) the interpretation. Second, voters must articulate why judges should vote off theory. Third, voters should include why theory comes first. These arguments include we must know the rules of a game before we can play it. Also, if a case is abusive you shouldn’t engage an uneducational case.

Fairness is a gateway issue and thus must be evaluated before the content of the Affirmative and Negative case.

Topicality has the exact same structure except that it concerns the meaning of the words in the resolution. The interpretation specifies the meaning of words. The violation demonstrates how the opponent does not meet the standard. Mention what the definition includes and excludes. The c-point is the standards, which set up why the interpretation is important. Voters need to have an internal link to standards.

Answering theory requires you to answer all four parts. You only need to take out one. The person running theory must win all four. Begin answering theory by reminding the judge that your opponent must win all four parts. Offensive reasons to win the interpretation requires a counter interpretation. Offense off standards can be link turns or impact turns. You can answer voters in a few ways. When you’re turning standards, you want to control the link to the voter.

RVI: No risk arguments means that winning theory wins the round, it is unfair for them to win if they win, but I don’t win the round by winning theory. Time suck says that I have to spend all of my NR answering this theory because he goes all-in on 1AR theory, I must answer it to win the theory. Theory is bad means running a kritik of theory.